



# Training Opportunities for Local Planning & Zoning Board Members

August 2009

Volume 3, Issue 3

## Thank You

The Staff of the Division of Planning and Environmental Management is saying farewell and thank you to our outgoing Commissioner Dr. William Pammer, Jr. While we look forward to making new plans, we look fondly back at all the good work we accomplished under the guidance of Dr. Pammer. We wish him equal success in his new endeavors.

## The Importance of Water

No one can deny the importance of water. In planning and zoning, water is one of the key components to development. In Sullivan County we are lucky to have an abundance of clean, potable water as well as numerous bodies of water that provide aesthetic beauty and recreational opportunities. With

these assets, there comes responsibility for keeping it clean, and keeping accessibility equitable. There is also responsibility associated with the downside of so much water: **flooding**. In this issue we discuss ways the municipalities can reduce some of the risks as well as some of the costs attributable

to flooding and flood insurance. We hope that when communities see how simple some of these provisions are, they will adopt some and encourage others. The Sullivan County Division of Planning and Environmental Management is always available to assist a municipality with these issues.

## FEMA's New Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM)

The FIRM update process is a collaborative effort between government agencies, private consultants, local officials and residents. To kick off the public input period for the updates, Sullivan County Planning hosted a series of informational sessions in early July at the Government Center.

On July 7 and 8, municipal officials were invited to attend three Community Coordination Officers' Meetings. At each of these sessions, William Nechamen, a DEC floodplain manager, gave a

presentation outlining the update process and the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). As a coordinating agency, the DEC's role is to help communities to meet their obligations and maintain their status and good standing with the NFIP. Following Mr. Nechamen's presentation, Matt Mampara, a water resources engineer, described the science behind the new flood data. Mr. Mampara works for the Dewberry consulting firm, with whom FEMA has contracted to gather the flood data that underlies the preliminary

new FIRM maps. After this, attendees met with FEMA, DEC and Dewberry representatives to examine and discuss each municipality's maps.

On the evening of July 8, an Open House was held at the Government Center, during which members of the public could review the maps one-on-one with representatives of FEMA and the DEC. This was an opportunity for people to learn whether their flood insurance requirements will change, and to better understand the changing hydrology and hydraulics of their local waterways.

The public comment period is still underway, and any Sullivan County resident may view the preliminary updated maps at his or her municipal hall. Residents should contact their code

*Continued on page 2*

### Inside this issue:

- Importance of Water 1
- FEMA's New Flood Insurance Rate Maps 1
- Save Money on Flood Insurance 2
- Community Rating System 2
- Stream Clean Up 2009 3
- Rain Garden Demonstration Project 3
- Narrowsburg Water District wins Award 3
- Stream Maintenance Brochure Released 3
- Training Opportunities 4



## FIRM Update *Continued from Page 1*

enforcement officers to schedule a time to view and discuss the maps. In addition to paper maps, each municipality has received a DVD containing digital maps which can be manipulated to show more detail or other relevant features.

Adopting the new FIRM is an excellent opportunity to look at municipal regulations, and consider entering the Community Rating System. Read below for more information about this program, and how it can help reduce insurance costs.

A copy of Mr. Nechamen's presentation is available on our website, along with links to many FEMA publications on flood management and protection, and the FIRM update process. We hope you will take a close look at the maps for your municipality, and if you have questions or concerns please contact FEMA. The maps are only as good as the data, and your input is important.

## Reduce Flood Insurance Costs

Flood insurance is a costly requirement for many residents of Sullivan County, a county largely characterized by bodies of water and prone to devastating floods. Preventative flood measures are imperative to ensure the health and safety of communities, and also necessary to be eligible for the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), a program which provides reduced cost flood insurance to residents of participating municipalities. Fortunately, most Sullivan County municipalities have adopted the 1987 minimum requirements for participation.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has calculated that buildings built to the NFIP standards suffer much less flood related damage than unprotected buildings. However, they can (and do) still suffer damage, so higher protection levels are recommended. To encourage communities to increase protection levels, NFIP has instituted a voluntary program, the Community Rating System (CRS), which provides incentives, including reduced insurance costs, for communities to undertake public awareness and floodplain management beyond the minimum 1987 requirements. These things include adopting and enforcing higher standards for safer new development, and preserving open space in the floodplain.

With the recent completion of new Flood Insurance Rate Maps (see article on page 1), which municipalities will have to adopt, there is the opportunity to piggy back these incentives on to new legislation. To make things even easier, many organizations and government agencies have drafted model legislation that towns and villages can easily adopt. New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has created an Optional Additional Language for prevention of flood damage which can qualify for CRS points, and are willing to help communities tailor this language to fit the unique conditions of their floodplains. FEMA is also available to provide assistance in preparing an application to the CRS program. Currently, no Sullivan County municipalities have used the CRS, but we hope the towns and villages will take advantage of this opportunity to adopt some of the language and pass along savings to their residents while increasing their health and welfare.

To learn more about the Community Rating System, visit: [www.fema.gov/nfip/crs.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/nfip/crs.shtm) or call (317) 848-2898

## Community Rating System

The Community Rating System (CRS) program rewards communities that undertake floodplain activities beyond the requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program. It is a point system program that **reduces flood insurance premiums up to 45%** for the citizens of participating communities. The three goals of the CRS are:

1. Reduce flood losses;
2. Facilitate accurate insurance rating; and
3. Promote the awareness of flood insurance.

For CRS participating communities, flood insurance premium rates are discounted in increments of 5% based on levels of participation. The CRS levels, or classes, for local communities are based on 18 creditable activities, organized under four categories:

1. Public Information,
2. Mapping and Regulations,
3. Flood Damage Reduction, and
4. Flood Preparedness.

Small changes could have a drastic and lasting effect on communities, and ultimately the well-being of Sullivan County. Should your community decide to adopt new hazard mitigation language, please make sure that any changes are brought to the attention of NYS DEC so that they may review the final language and assure that it is compliant with FEMA's regulations. If further information is desired on NYSDEC's Optional Additional Language, refer to <http://www.dec.ny.gov/regulations/regulations.html> or call NYS DEC Floodplain Management Section at 518-402-8185.

## Stream Clean Up 2009

Sullivan County Division of Planning and Environmental Management teamed up with the Sullivan County Soil and Water Conservation District to organize and sponsor this year's stream clean up. With three locations this year, and over forty volunteer participants, we were able to clean up over a mile of stream riparian area. This annual effort

helps reduce pollution and pollution related problems in our waterways. Next year, DPEM plans to select one location, where we will make a focused effort. If you would like to nominate a location, or receive more information on the program or stream maintenance in general, feel free to contact us.



## Narrowsburg Water District Has Award Winning Operator

Scott Birney, the water and sewer superintendant for the Town of Tusten, recently received the Water Operator of the Year Award from the New York Rural Water Association (NYRWA). Scott has 17 years of service with water and wastewater certification. He has played a large part in the 70% water loss reduction for the water district through leak detection, service line repair and replacement, and pH correction. The Division of Planning and Environmental Management congratulates him and the example he sets for others in his position.

## Stream Maintenance Brochure

Sullivan County DPEM recently completed a brochure to help homeowners maintain streams and stream banks on their property. Proper maintenance can reduce downstream damage and flooding. To receive a copy, please contact the Division of Planning and Environmental Management at 845-807-0527 or [planning@scgnet.us](mailto:planning@scgnet.us)

## Rain Gardens

Lake Superior Park in the Town of Bethel has a new attraction. Sullivan County Division of Planning and Environmental Management teamed up with Sullivan County Division of Public Works - Parks and Recreation, Sullivan Renaissance, and Tri Valley High School and built a rain garden. The rain garden was designed to receive runoff from the concession stand and bathhouse roof, and will act to slow down the rush of water by absorbing and filtering the storm water diverted from the gutters.

Rain gardens provide a number of benefits, not the least of which is to sequester water thereby reducing downstream flooding. Other benefits include groundwater recharge, pollutant abatement, reduction of mosquito habitat, increase in beneficial insects, and increase in habitat for birds and butterflies.



The Lake Superior rain garden was installed with the help of students from the Tri Valley Natural Resources Class and their instructor, Robert Hayes, and was funded as an Environmental Demonstration through Sullivan Renaissance. An informational brochure and

interpretive sign will be added so visitors can learn about rain gardens and build their own. Each completed garden will help to control storm water runoff and counteract terrible flooding Sullivan County has seen in recent years.



# Local Planning & Zoning Training Opportunities

Sullivan County Division of Planning & Environmental Management

## Upcoming Training Opportunities

**Sullivan County  
Division of Planning  
& Environmental  
Management  
(DPEM)**

The Government Center  
100 North Street  
Monticello, NY 12701

Phone: 845-807-0527

Fax: 845-794-5538

E-mail: [planning@scgnet.us](mailto:planning@scgnet.us)

Website:

[www.scgnet.us](http://www.scgnet.us)

### Farmers Marketing

Tuesday September 15, 2009

7:00 - 9:00 pm

Delaware Youth Center

Callicoon, NY

Designed primarily for farmers and agricultural producers, this workshop will focus on marketing, branding, and value-added product line expansion.

### Farm Relations Workshop

Saturday, October 10, 2009

1:00 - 3:00 pm

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Ferndale, NY

Farm neighbor relationships: obstacle or opportunity? Explore and discuss how these often strained relationships can be mended to benefit both parties.

To register for this event, contact Joe Walsh at 845-292-6180

### Outdoor Summit

Saturday, October 24th, 2009

10:00 am - 1:00 pm

The Government Center

This event will provide an opportunity to discuss ways in which we can work together to keep our natural resources working for us as we continue to implement our County Open Space Plan.

### Wildlife Habitat in Your Backyard

Wednesday November 18, 2009

7:00 - 9:00 pm

Daniel Pierce Library

Grahamsville, NY

This session will focus on what homeowners can do to protect and create wildlife habitat. It will include information on the benefits of using native species in gardens and landscapes, as well as the problems associated with invasive plants.



For more information or to register for the classes above, please call Heather Jacksy at 845-807-0527 or send an email to: [planning@scgnet.us](mailto:planning@scgnet.us)

The New York State Department of State Local Government Division website contains a wealth of information on local training opportunities, downloadable publications and resources, grant opportunities and much more. Check them out at: [www.dos.state.ny.us/lgss/](http://www.dos.state.ny.us/lgss/)

## Sustainable Development and Land Conservation

### A morning with Ed McMahon

Saturday, September 26th

9:00 AM-12:00 PM

CVI Building, Liberty, NY

\$10 per person Advanced Registration is Required.

The event is sponsored by Delaware Highlands Conservancy (DHC), Sullivan Renaissance and NYCDEP

Please contact DHC at 845-807-0535 to reserve your spot at the seminar!

**Ed McMahon** is an author, attorney, lecturer, and expert in green and sustainable development practices, community planning, growth management, land conservation, urban design, and historic preservation. He will be exploring how new development can be made more attractive, more efficient, more profitable, and more environmentally sensible, as well as the importance of maintaining our downtown districts.